In Herskovits & Herskovits E-6 (1928-1929) 1934
Bush Negroes
Saramacca

they told us, though never willing to name the villages where they stood, whose walls were most elaborately ornamented with symbols marked in red and black and white, the three sacred colors which appeared on the stools and which the men used for painting their faces and bodies for the dances. On the upper river we had been told that these shrines were in the villages below, and on the lower river it was always intimated that it was up above where the great shrines stood. We had been told of stools which were whitened with sacred pemba, and blackened with soot in the *Fa'aka Pau* houses—the houses of the ancestral spirits—and of the covered whitened vessels which were in the Vodu and Apuku houses, the shrines for the bush and snake deities, placed there for the spirits when they chose to animate them.

So we found it in this house dedicated to the spirits of the bush.

The hut was narrow and long, with walls of woven palm, and a floor made of hard smooth clay into which bare feet had nevertheless worn grooves. To one side of the door stood a drum of the type called *tumao*—the long drum. It was cylindrical, and narrowed but slightly toward the bottom. White clay had once covered it, but now there were irregular lines of white marking the cracks in the wood.

On the other side of the door, against the same wall, lay several large balls of clay. These the old woman was keeping for the obia pots she would make from time to time. Among the Negroes of the town as well as in the bush, these black pots, made by women of the bush, were held to have great magical potency.

"I never make too many pots at once," the old woman said. "I make them for myself as I need them and for the young people of the family." A woman who had not passed her period of childbearing could not make them. "Obia pots are things for old, old women. I cannot tell you about making them."

Leaving these lumps of clay, the woman led us farther into the enclosure, until we stood in front of a raised altar

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ticular animal. The red terrier will not hunt anything else. It stands now ferociously over the body of the dead parrot, its tongue hanging out, panting.

Bows and arrows are as common as shotguns, and preferred by many of the black huntsmen because they make no noise, need no munitions. The bow is fashioned from one of the South American hardwoods, letterwood or purpleheart. The shaft is tremendously resilient, and strung with *singrasi* it takes a stout arm indeed to bend it. Singrasi is a species of grass which is hand-spun into tough cord, by rolling it on the flesh of the thigh. When unflexed, the carved bow is nearly six feet long.

The arrows are made from hollow reeds, and are extremely light and well balanced. Into one end of the reed a foot-long hardwood point is set, wrapped with singrasi and gummed. At the other end, the ferrule is similarly set in, the joint again being wrapped around to prevent splitting. Some arrows have metal points filed from old bush-knives. A five-foot arrow like this can be used as a little javelin for spearing small game. The Bush Negroes also use blunt arrows to stun birds.

A naked savage stalking through the bush, armed only with a bow and arrow, furnishes a sight of the primitive that is fast disappearing from this commonplace world. The Djuka calls some of his game, principally the agoutis, by imitating their cries on a little whistle, made out of baked clay or a hollow shell. The imitation is so accurate, in the case of smaller game, as to fool even the jaguar that feeds on

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African comb, from the region of Nigeria, is shown on page 175. It can be seen that the wooden comb is not a Djuka invention, as every characteristic of the Bush Negro pieces can be found on this West African piece, except the ornamental piercing.

The arts of weaving and basketry are not as highly developed among the Djukas as is the carving of wooden implements. The Bush Negroes do not weave the cotton cloth they wear. It is obtained, instead, by trading at the white settlements. The only weaving among them consists of cotton leg and arm bands—things that do not count for much so far as industry is concerned, but which expand the wearer's ego and add enormously to his or her self-esteem. The basketry of the Djukas, like the weaving, is simple and competent. Unornamented circular baskets, varying in size from a foot to a yard in diameter, can be seen in all the villages. They are used for carrying yams, rice, and foodstuffs generally. The finest basket work does not occur in these baskets, however, but in the cassava squeezers, those elongated tubes for producing cassava flour. These are beautifully woven of uniform rattan, and decorated with darker strips to form a simple pattern near each end. The finished product is an admirable piece of work, of which the owner must indeed be proud.

Pottery is made by the Djukas for utilitarian purposes only, and the solid black, absolutely undecorated clay ware has no particular element of beauty. The pots are black, stolid, and unimaginative. They are simply necessities.

But when the necessities of life have been provided for,